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SUBJECT: MOROCCO POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS

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KING MOHAMMED SHOWS HE'S A MAN OF THE PEOPLE  
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12. Foregoing an opportunity to lobby the world on the Western Sahara at UNGA, King Mohammed VI elected instead to stay home in Morocco to launch projects related to the Palace-initiated National Human Development Initiative (INDH) and demonstrate to Moroccans that he is a man of the people. Coming on the heels of his widely covered visits to urban sites in Tetouan and Casablanca, the King -- accompanied by his brother, Moulay Rachid, and local officials -- traveled to Meknes on September 19-22 where he kicked off INDH projects on drinking water and liquid sanitation; construction of a socio-cultural center; olive tree cultivation; and rural roads and highways. Ditching at the last minute his pre-arranged program, which had him visiting freshly painted neighborhoods on a red carpet, the King instead ventured tie-less into popular neighborhoods where he talked with local residents, kissed babies and got his shoes dusty. Powerful images of the King on television kneeling to embrace a severely disabled youngster at Meknes' El Ichrak Center of Education, Training and Integration of Disabled Children have caused the most sensation. The King's travels have been a huge hit with the people and the press and have set a powerful example for government ministers -- who were invited to accompany him -- to emulate. King Mohammed next travels to Oujda on the Algerian border in the north.

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SWEDISH MPs VISIT LAAYOUNE  
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13. A delegation of Swedish parliamentarians (MPs) visited Laayoune and Rabat on September 15-21, according to Moroccan news reports. In Laayoune, the Swedish delegation met with the new Wali, Charki Draiss; Sahrawi MPs; local elected officials; members of civil society; and former Polisario officials. In his meeting with the delegation, the Wali restated Morocco's call for a "negotiated political solution" to the Western Sahara that would guarantee Morocco's unity and sovereignty over its "southern provinces." He reportedly recounted the suffering of Moroccan citizens "sequestered" in Tindouf who, having been forced to go to Tindouf, have become a "bargaining chip" for the "enemies" of Morocco's territorial integrity. In Rabat, the delegation met with Parliament Speaker Abdelwahed Radi, Minister of Health Mohamed Cheikh Biadillah (a Sahrawi) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Omar Hilal. Interviewed on Moroccan national television on September 20, the Swedish MPs said they were pleased to see for themselves the "real picture" of what is going on in Laayoune rather than being told by others. They said they were "surprised" by the level of development and infrastructure they witnessed in Laayoune.

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SOCIALIST ALLIANCE HOLDS TOWN MEETINGS IN WESTERN SAHARA  
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14. According to Moroccan daily Al Bayane, members of parliament's Socialist Alliance caucus held a series of town gatherings in Boujdor, Dakhla, Laayoune and Smara in the Western Sahara on September 18-21. The purpose of the meetings was to give the local population an opportunity to vent freely and openly their frustrations with the national government. Socialist Alliance caucus leader Mohammed Ahajjam, who visited the US earlier this year, pledged to the participants that his caucus would transmit their comments and complaints to the appropriate authorities and take up their cause with vigor in parliament. Frequent problems cited by the participants, according to Al Bayane, included complaints about 1) the absence of politicians in their

districts except at election time; 2) elected officials who forget their election promises; 3) elected officials who only take care of their friends and those close to them once in office; 4) lack of jobs, especially among Sahrawi youth; 5) unhealthy living conditions; 6) a public school system that does not measure up to expectations; 7) a poor public health system; 8) abuses of power; and 9) a suffocating and slow bureaucracy. Al Bayane reported that not one participant ever denied or questioned their identity as Moroccans during the discussions.

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PJD ORGANIZES "BROTHERHOOD CARAVAN"  
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15. In an initiative conceived by the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD), Morocco's political parties will launch the "Brotherhood Caravan" on October 23, according to Moroccan news reports. The caravan will feature the voyage of 16 families -- chosen to represent each of Morocco's 16 regions -- through 7 Moroccan cities to destinations in Laayoune, Smara and Dakhla in the Western Sahara where they will take up residence with 16 Sahrawi families. Symbolizing that all Moroccans are members of the same family, the 16 Sahrawi families will then make a similar trip in reverse traveling north to take up residence in a home located in each of Morocco's 16 regions. According to reports, the caravan will depart Fes (Istiqlal) on October 23 and travel through Meknes (PJD), Rabat (National Movement), Casablanca and Marrakech (Constitutional Union), Agadir (Socialist Union of Popular Forces), and Tiznit (Party of Progress and Socialism) where the traveling families will be treated to a big rally hosted by the respective locally elected mayor (whose respective party affiliations are indicated above in parentheses). In addition to members of the Moroccan press, 16 foreign journalists will be invited to travel with the caravan. According to PJD parliamentarian Lahcen Daoudi, the caravan is being organized to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Green March on November 6.

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DRUG SEIZURE IN THE NORTH  
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16. According to Moroccan daily L'economiste, the Royal Gendarmerie of Tetouan seized two tons of hashish in a rural village near the northern mountain town of Chefchaouen on September 19. One drug trafficker was arrested in the operation.  
RILEY